

Carter Takes 'Sobering' Trip to South Bronx

By LEE DEMBART

In an effort to demonstrate a commitment to cities, President Carter, in New York on United Nations affairs, made a sudden and dramatic trip yesterday morning to the South Bronx, where he viewed some of the country's worst urban blight.

The Presidential motorcade passed block after block of burned-out and abandoned buildings, rubble-strewn lots and open fire hydrants, and people shouting "Give us money!" and "We want jobs!"

Twice Mr. Carter got out of his limousine, walked around and talked to people. He said the Federal Government should do something to help, but he made no specific commitment.

After the tour, when Mr. Carter returned to the United Nations Plaza Hotel, he said:

"It was a very sobering trip for me to see the devastation that has taken place in the South Bronx in the last five years. But I'm encouraged in some ways

by the strong effort of tenant groups to rebuild. I'm impressed by the spirit of hope and determination by the people to save what they have. I think they still have to know we care."

Accompanying Mr. Carter were Mayor Beame, who had been invited to the President's hotel suite yesterday morning but had not been told Mr. Carter was going to the Bronx, and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Patricia

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Carter Finds Hope Amid Blight on 'Sobering' Trip to Bronx

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Roberts Harris, whose office laid out the route.

Although the trip was kept a secret until the President was well on his way, it was no secret once he got to the Bronx, where the motorcade was led by six motorcycle escorts with sirens blaring, and several police cars. Three helicopters hovered overhead as the party crossed the Third Avenue Bridge and headed up the Grand Concourse—a decaying remnant of a once fashionable boulevard.

Small crowds of people watched as the President's cream-colored limousine went by.

The two stops that the President made along the route were designed to show him one of the few hopeful projects and the much more common hopeless areas of the Bronx.

The first stop was at 1186 Washington Avenue, between 167th and 168th Streets, where Mr. Carter visited a housing renovation project. There 40 people have converted a six-story tenement into a building, boasting freshly painted hallways, 28 oak-floored apartments and solar heat collectors on the roof.

Greeting for President

Claude Briley greeted the President, saying: "Hi Jimmy, I'm glad to see you're in the Bronx checking out conditions."

"How do you think we're making out?" Mr. Carter asked.

"Fine," said Mr. Briley. "We hope to make more progress."

Ramon Rueda, executive director of the People's Development Corporation, which undertook the renovation, appeared and said, "What a surprise!"

"We're proud of what you're doing," said Mr. Carter.

"We proud of you, too," Mr. Rueda said. "We have a low-interest mortgage, but we need more money, Carter. If you assist us in getting more CETA money, we could show a serious dent in the South Bronx."

Someone invited the President inside to look at the apartments, and Mr. Carter appeared about to go when an aide said there was not enough time.

"Gee whiz," said someone on the stoop, "this is really something, talking to the President of the United States on our own doorstep." The President and his party then shook hands again with the group, got back into their cars and went down the street.

"I feel ecstatic," Mr. Rueda said later. "He seemed completely sincere, and if he was putting on a show he was certainly making a good impression. I hope he will come back when we finish the next phase of our project."

The next phase includes a rehabilitation of five buildings in the area backed by a \$3 million federally-financed loan and funds from the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act to train the workers.

Urban Homesteading

The area was recently designated as a demonstration of multifamily urban homesteading.

If Washington Avenue was the hopeful stop, the hopeless one still awaited the President's party.

On Charlotte Street near Boston Road, not far from Crotona Park, the caravan stopped in the middle of a block on which all buildings on both sides had been demolished and the bricks had been bulldozed into heaps that in some places were eight feet high.

Mr. Carter, Mr. Beame and Mrs. Harris walked through two blocks of rubble that looked like the result of wartime bombing.

"Most of this occurred in the last five years after Nixon cut off the urban renewal funds?" Mr. Carter asked Mrs. Harris.

"Yes," she said.

"See which areas can still be salvaged," the President said. "Maybe we can create a recreation area and turn it around. Get a map of the whole area and show me what could be done."

Speaking to reporters, the President said: "There's been a rapid deterioration of this neighborhood, but high rises in the midst of devastation are holding their own."

One of the spectators, Marvin N. Mitchell, of 1555 Boston Road, stopped in front of the Santa Maria grocery store later and said: "It's nice the President has come here to see for himself, but someone has to tell him that the people here need help. We need jobs. Otherwise the Bronx is going to go down."

Mr. Mitchell is an unemployed plasterer who said he had last worked three years ago and had worked onup sporadi-

cally during the three years before that.

Secretary Harris said later that the route the President had been taken on "shows the very bad deterioration that has taken place in the South Bronx—it showed what could be done by a variety of methods to halt and reverse it, and I think the point was made."

After the blackout of last July and the looting that followed, Mr. Carter was criticized by Vernon E. Jordan Jr., executive director of the National Urban League, who said he had failed to "signal his concern for the cities and the Poor" by visiting the South Bronx, Harlem or the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn.

Yesterday Jody Powell, the President's press secretary, said that Mr. Carter had decided four or five weeks ago, to visit the South Bronx, and that planning had proceeded from then. "Since it is not true he has not been to areas like that, it is not a response to anybody's criticisms," Mr. Powell said.

But no one could recall when Mr. Carter, or any other President had visited an area like the South Bronx—a point that was underscored by the reaction of people all along the route.

As the motorcade headed down Brook Avenue yesterday morning, one man on the sidewalk said, "The President on Brook Avenue!"

His companion shouted, "All right!"



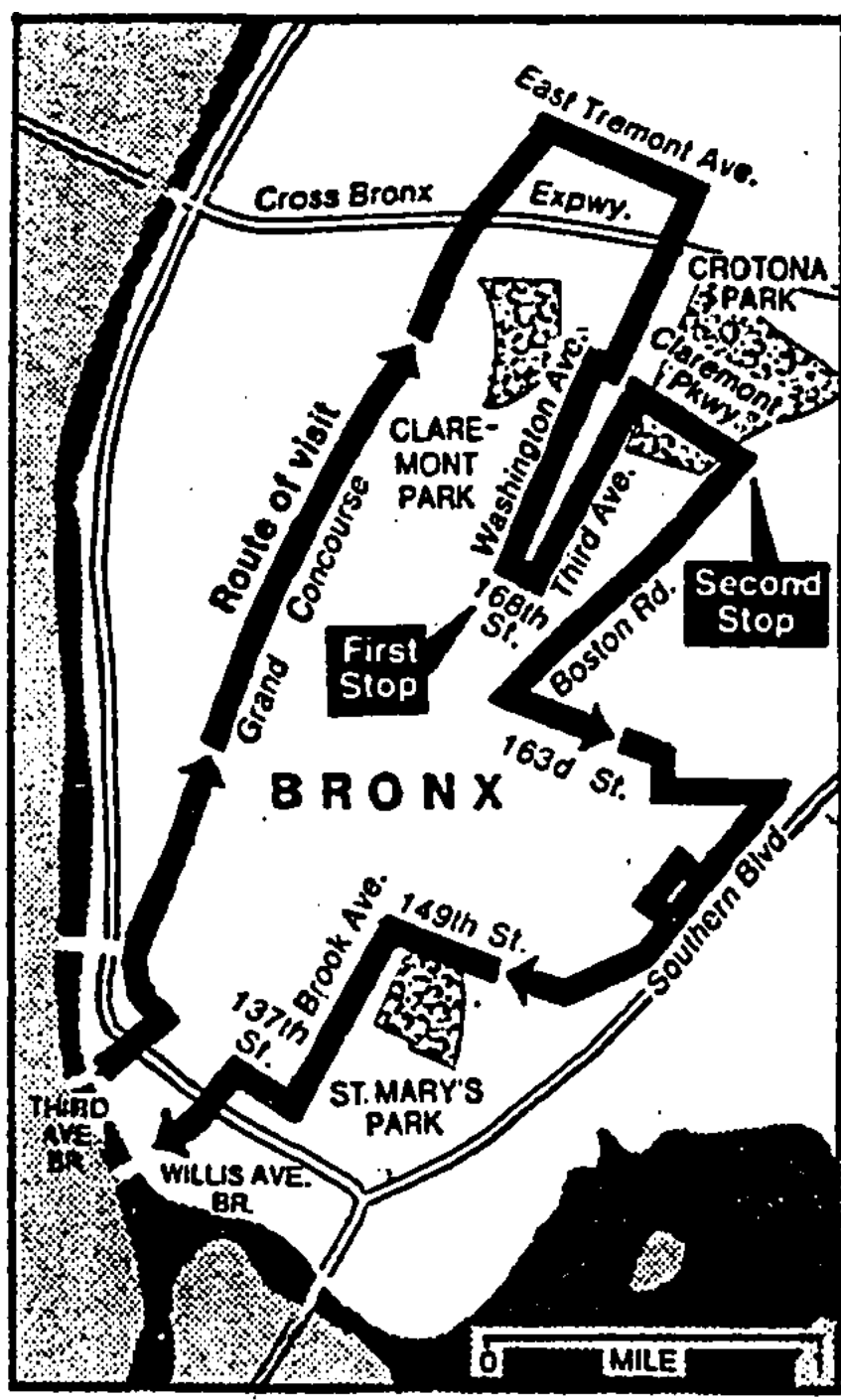
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Touring the South Bronx, President Carter walked through a rubble-strewn, empty lot toward abandoned buildings. Secret Service men accompanied him.

The New York Times

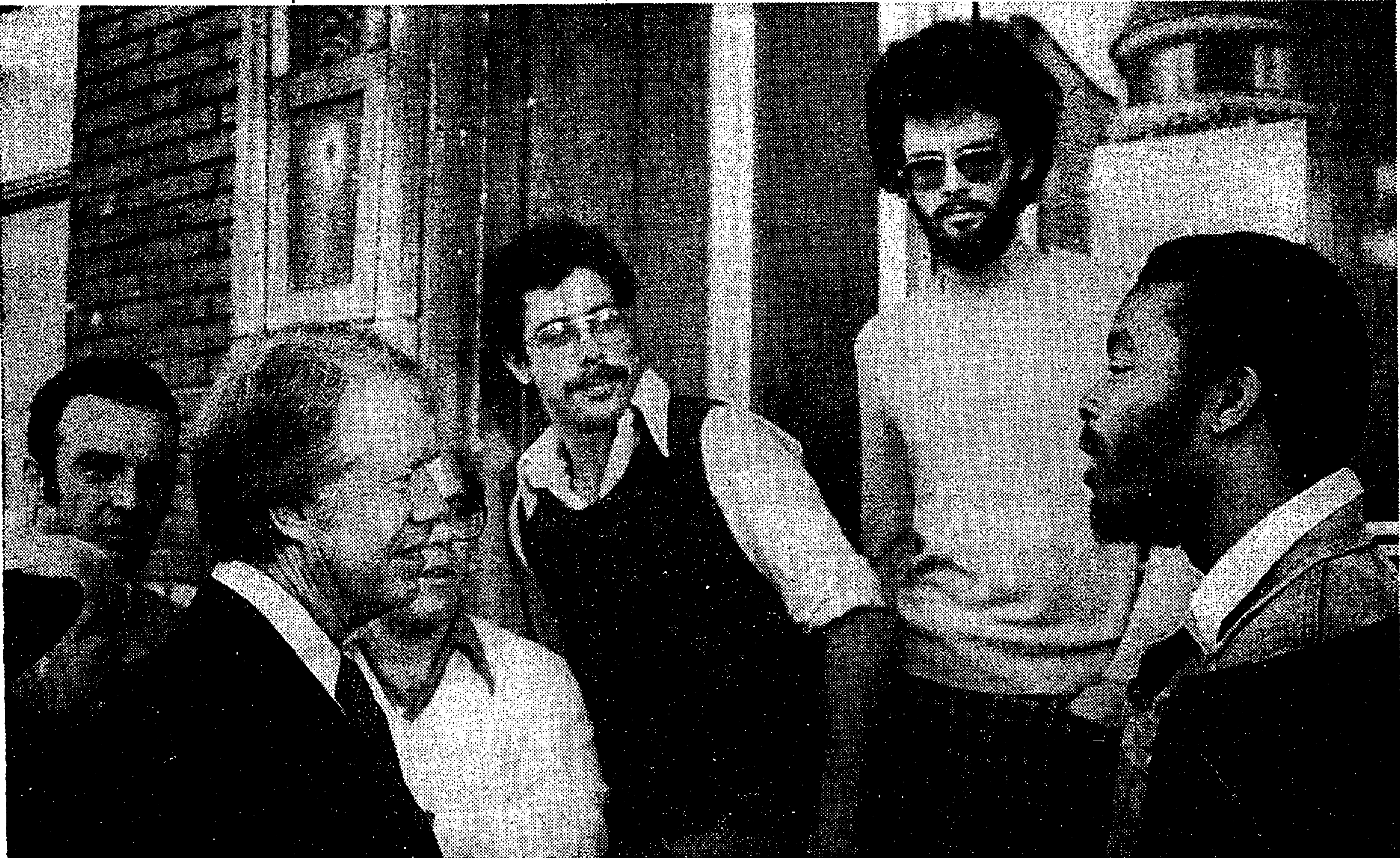
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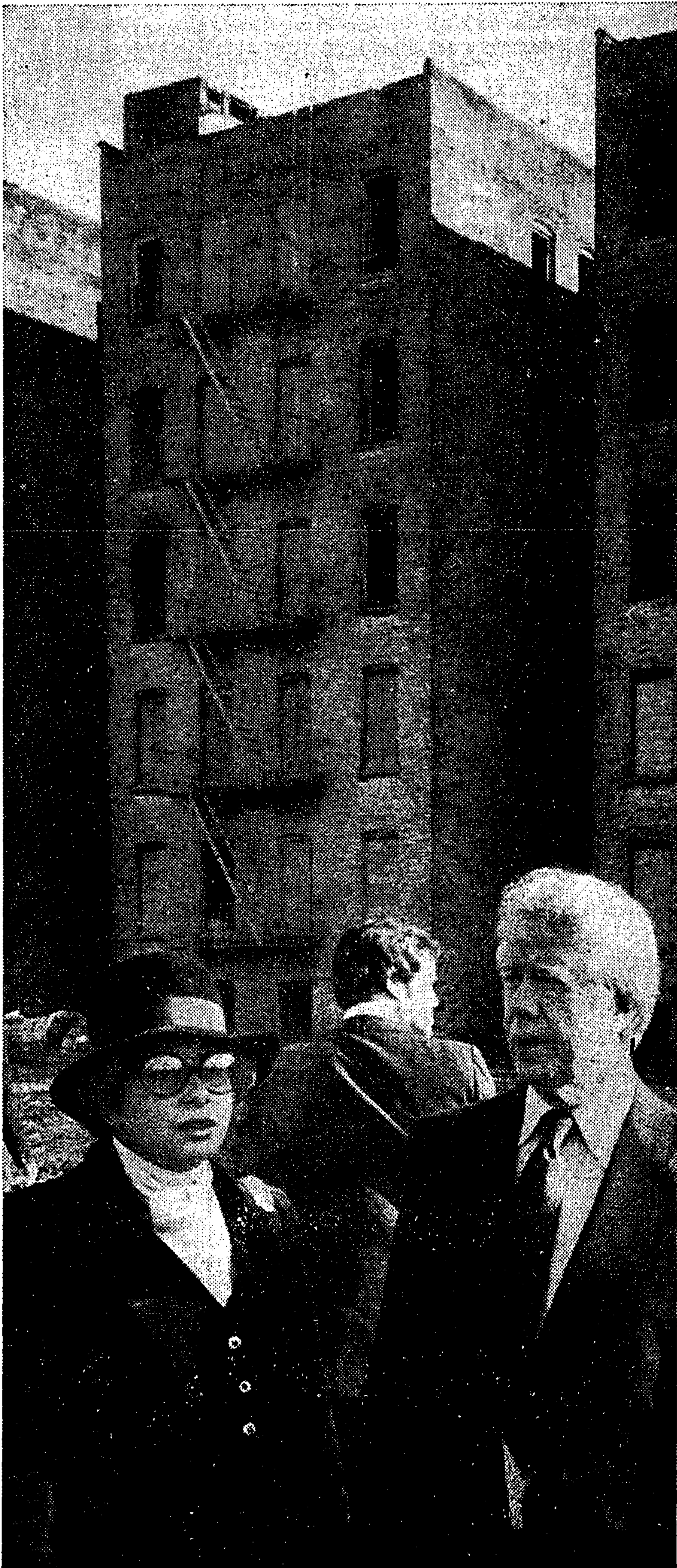
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President Carter during his surprise trip to the South Bronx yesterday. "It was a very sobering trip for me to see the devastation that has taken place in the South Bronx in the last five years. But I'm encouraged in some ways by the strong effort of tenant groups to rebuild." Mr. Carter said.



Photographs for The New York Times by TERESA ZABALA

President Carter greeting local residents at Washington Avenue and 168th Street and, top, walking with Mayor Beame at Boston Road and Charlotte Street



President Carter with Patricia Roberts Harris, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, at Boston Road and Charlotte Street in the South Bronx.